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Primavera Systems Inc.: SureTrak Project Manager

Craig Stinson

Both a standalone project management program and a departmental front end to Primavera Project Planner (P3), SureTrak Project Manager 2.0 (\$400 street) is an attractive option for large organizations that already use P3. In addition, SureTrak's Webster add-on is an innovative tool for managing projects on an intranet. But on its own, SureTrak falls short of the better programs we reviewed in terms of features and usability.

The new Project KickStart Wizard helps novices set up projects with a series of detailed questions about tasks and resources. Unfortunately, after a good start, SureTrak slows you down. We found the program difficult to use, and we often had trouble locating specific features. Furthermore, the program maintains Windows 3.x conventions that will frustrate users accustomed to working in Windows 95.

SureTrak can handle projects with as many as 10,000 tasks, and the number of subprojects you can consolidate is limited only by available RAM. The program lets you track revenue and costs associated with resources, as well as assign up to six limits to a resource's availability. You can easily model a situation where, say, four technicians are available during a project's first four months and only two for the last three weeks. But SureTrak does not model overtime costs without a workaround, nor does it offer custom field calculations.

The well-designed PERT view includes a Trace Logic window that lets you isolate a particular task and its dependencies. Activity codes, such as responsibility and phase, can serve as project organizational tools and generate attractive "banding" heads in tabular views. But outlining is not as intuitive as it ought to be.

SureTrak can handle multiple critical paths, and it lets you specify that some float be incorporated into the definition of what is critical. Thus you can have activities that are almost critical stand out among critical tasks in Gantt charts. Unfortunately, PERT calculations for probabilities and duration deviations are not available, and SureTrak is limited to one baseline.

SureTrak includes SBL (SoftBridge Basic Language), a structured version of the programming language BASIC. The program

SureTrak's Web Publishing Wizard lets you build intricate HTML-based reports.

In the PERT view, SureTrak's Trace Logic isolates particular tasks and their dependencies.

Power	
Setup	Excellent
Tracking and modification	Good
Resource management	Fair
Multiple projects	Excellent
Reporting	Good
Workgroup capabilities	Good
Customization and integration	Fair
Ease	
Setup	Good
Tracking and modification	Good
Resource management	Fair
Multiple projects	Good
Reporting	Good
Workgroup capabilities	Excellent
Customization and integration	Good

SureTrak Project Manager 2.0. Street price: \$400. Primavera Systems Inc., Bala

programming language BASIC. The program supports OLE Automation but does not support macro recording.

Systems Inc., Bala
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SureTrak's e-mail and Web publishing capabilities are first-rate. The program supports both MAPI and VIM mail protocols, and an included post-office applet lets you communicate with workers who don't have their own copies of SureTrak. Unlike Microsoft Project 98, SureTrak does not let you automatically update project plans via the Internet. For that, you'll need an add-on, Webster 2.0 (\$1,500 street for six users), which lets team members report the hours they worked on tasks through a Web browser. Finally, SureTrak offers an outstanding Web Publishing Wizard that lets you post multiple project reports to structured Web pages, making it simple to set up a single set of links to all relevant data.

Company Finder
Primavera Systems,
Inc.

As lieutenant to P3, SureTrak serves its role well. But as a standalone product, SureTrak is outclassed by the current competition.

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From the June 30, 1998 issue of *PC Magazine*

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